

1. The Immaculate

To foreigners it seems, that this is particularly Asian trait - to agree by word, but disagree in mind. Upon some reflection, it is possible to realize that this is a common human nature, and hence it is everywhere among people. In Myanmar this is little bit far-fetched, because here the consequence is that many people "accept" a huge number of rules and regulations, traditions and superstitions (and many are officially proclaimed), but rarely they actually follow them (apart from a small set of the inevitable). Recently I have come across this nice Burmese sentence:

"ခပ်သွက်သွက် ဟုတ်မှန်ပါကြောင်း ထောက်ခံ လိုက်ရသည်။" ["khat-thwet-thwet hote-hman-par-kyaung htauk-khan like-yar-par-thi"], which means "(One) has to agree and follow (saying) "yes, it is true" (although) quite shaking (disagreeing inside)."

In case of monks this is very common – a monk explains something to lay people, and all agree in unison. In fact, many of them might disagree inside, and many might not care at all. This becomes a problem when planning something in close future, or when solving an issue related to health, food, or place to stay. In other cases this happens when they hear teachings on Dhamma that they don't agree with. So far I was most successful (in learning their true attitude) by asking them "do you accept it?" They say: "Yes, I accept it." Then I ask "do you believe it?" And they reply: "No, I don't believe it." Thanks to that I can ask them their reasons and see if there's another way to understand each other.

A nice example of this agree-disagree is mentioned in the stories of the Buddha's previous births. There are 547 such stories called "*jātaka*", and the very first one – *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* – speaks right about that. Several years ago I made a Czech translation, see the attachment of this newsletter. There a group of lay people "agreed" to the Buddha's teachings, but upon the Buddha's departure, they returned to their previous non-Buddhist teachers. When the Buddha came again, they again "agreed" to follow the Buddha's teachings...



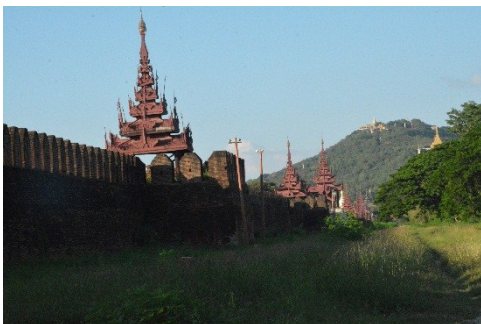
Apannaka Jataka (Jataka 1) (Pali, Eng, Cz) (tr. by monk Sarana).pdf

2. Maha Myat Muni Statue – Some Parts are Missing

The statue is reportedly 'missing' a thigh and back/spine. This is explained in the "Sagaing Hills History" (စစ်ကိုင်းတောင်သမိုင်း) by Shwe-Pyi U Ba Tin (ရွှေပြည် ဦးဘတင်း), p.135, by two stories of the Buddha's previous lives. First, as a king in an era without Buddhist Sāsana, the *bodhisatta* (Buddha-to-be) cut off legs, thighs, and hands of (other-than-paddy) farmers. He also removed back/spine of five princes.

3. Mandalay Hill

Recently I visited Mandalay Hill. See below some photos from there :-)



Mandalay Hill, looking from Mandalay Palace



The board at the entrance, the official name of the (top) pagoda



Atop the Mandalay Hill, this is the elevator-tower.



Mandalay Hill's top pagoda and a corner



One of four big Buddha statues around the Mandalay Hill's top pagoda



Near a Buddha Statue.



A pot with drinking water blessed by reciting 24 Conditions of *Paṭṭhāna*, each pot represents one *paṭṭhāna* condition.



A mosaic near the Mandalay Hill's top pagoda.



Looking outside from the Mandalay Hill's terrace.



Going downstairs.



A pagoda under the top pagoda, at the Mandalay Hill.



An ogre worshipping the pagoda.



An unnamed lady ...



Two big nāgas (dragons), from front.



Two big nāgas (dragons), from side.

4. Mandalay Palace

Mandalay Palace, according the Burmese stone inscription at the site, was destroyed during World War Two and in 1989 built again in the historical form, by decision of Gen. Than Shwe (not president yet). Previously there were 114 buildings, now there are only 66. The new construction cost over two hundred thousand dollars. For foreigners, entrance is not free, and visitor's passport should be shown in the office at the entrance to the area.



Portal to the Mandalay Palace area



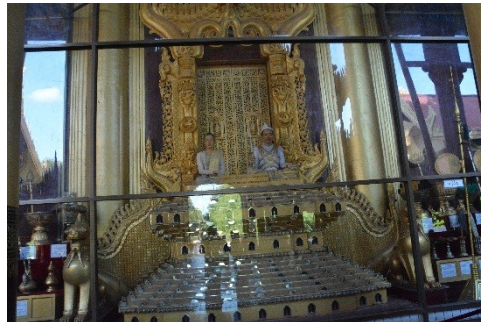
Stairs leading to the palace site



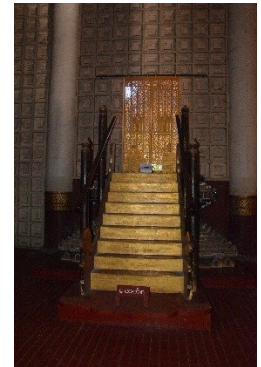
Old photographs of the original palace buildings



Various royal accessories (esp. betel receptacles) are exhibited behind glass and well described.



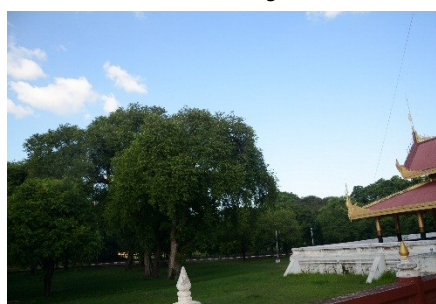
"Lion throne", king Mindon and queen Sakyardevi; see the big door behind them.



Door leading to the lion throne, at the backside of the construction.



Walk-way around the palace site



Outside the elevated palace area is a nice park.



A courtyard portion between the palace buildings.



Statues of king Thibaw and queen Suphayar-Lat (reigned 1878-1885) in a large building.



Another courtyard in the palace site.



A watchtower rising over the palace site.



Mandalay palace site, looking from the watchtower. Notice the little white house-like structures on the buildings. Maybe they were used for keeping a Buddha statue or another exalted image.



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Walls around the Mandalay Palace.

May all beings be happy :-)

monk Sarana